

1-11-1868

Letter from Sarah Whitney, Belmont,
Massachusetts, to Anne Whitney, Rome, Italy, 1868
January 11

Sarah Whitney

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Recommended Citation

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Bermont Sat. P.M. Jan. 11. 1868.

It will be 2 weeks to night my dearest Anne since I read yr No. 22, mailed Dec. 9. & lest the disappointment of not receiving No 23 to night shd incapacitate me tomorrow for trying to say something out of nothing, I take my pen now to tell you that the events of the week have been the hearing of Mr Phillips' lecture on Tues. a visit from Katie on Thurs. wh. lasted till Fri. when Mr L. came & took her home, & a call from H. Locke & his mother in the joy of a new leg that promised admirably to perform part of the duties of the one laid under the sod last Spring. Blessings on Mr. Palmer & all the men of genius who make art a handmaid of nature to relieve suffering & banish squeamishness. For squeamishness it is I suppose wh. has given me a faint, sickly feeling whenever H. has presented himself in the dancing pantaloons. I was particularly requested to tell you this neighborly news & to send kind remembrance with it - Mrs. Barnard hopes that I always send her love, wh. of course I don't ~~do~~ excepting when told to do it. She ^{wh.} has been so well that she came near going to church last Sun. where she has not been for 2 or 3 yrs. I shd think, is again suffering with the painful & alarming symptoms about her heart. The terrible poisons wh. the Dec. give her may soon bring her back again to the point of health in wh. we all rejoiced to see her a week ago.

Mr. Lamberts financial affairs wh.

have gone from bad to worse keep his health in
the old precarious way - & poor Katie can never
grow strong while she has so much mental distress.
To be the mother of such noble boys might it wd
seem reconcile her to a good deal of sorrow, but in
her heart is a sense of loss not to be appeased yet.
The announcement by Mr Allen of his engagement
to Miss Andrews a friend of Mary has been a sad
surprise - not however wholly devoided from pleasure
for she respects & loves Miss A. & feels that no one whom
she knows, is likely to prove ^a good step mother. It
will be a sad day that takes from the much tried
Grandmother this dear little pet Katie. The mar-
riage is not to take place till next summer & the
engagement I suppose is not yet generally known.
This is the first time I have spoken of it, though
I heard it 2 or 3 weeks ago. It was a great good
to me & to us all to have this little visit from K.
but it was a greater gift than I shall ask again
for I cannot but share her anxiety about Mr L.
& do not wish her to leave him for the sake of
giving me pleasure. She is willing to do it for the
love she bears to you & the desire she has to gratify
you by ministering to me. I know that both of us
can have a great deal of happiness in the posses-
sion of each others love if 3 or 4 impossible
miles do cruelly separate us.

Mr. Phillips' lecture was not so depressing as I had
feared it might be - It was a powerful sermon

upon the danger of deriving a hard breadth from
the line of justice & duty - illustrated by the story
of our fathers' compromises in the making of the
Constitution, & the Governmental policy in '61 in
the attempt to prosecute the war without touching
Slavery. Our danger now of course he sees to be in
the selecting of a man for the Presidency who with-
out the most votes, leaving out of sight his want
of principles. I think we all came away a
little more shaky respecting Gen Grant than we
went in - but still with great admiration
for Mr P's unwavering devotion to what he believes
to be truth & duty I cannot forget that he is
human & may misjudge. I am glad I heard
him. It is the first of the Lyceum course that has
taken me out. I shd have taken Katie to
Mr Thayer's reading on Thurs. evg but the Mercury
was too near zero & the wind too furious. The
paper that wing announced the release of little
Mary Livermore. Poor Legy is relieved of an
exhausting labor & anxiety thereby - but her
sorrowing, if sorrowing it be will be mingled
with many tears. The poor little thing dictated
a letter to me less than a fortnight ago, reminding
me of the promise made probably some yrs ago to
give her my phiz on tin or paper.
(Box - & 23 has come marked etc - finished on
Longfathers day when you were expecting a dinner
party & had but 1/2 dozen knives & forks for their
use - & this sets mother to wondering about by way

of living - whether you have taken unfurnished
apartments & have had the labour expense
of supplying all sorts of household needs -
Then the cold of many Italy weighs upon her
spirits & she imagines you suffering beyond
any former experience with only a chance
of suffocation in the way of relief. Well
that doesn't strike me as the most agreeable
phase of Roman life - but if you can contrive
ways to keep comfortable & not take horrible
colds & not get prostrated with the process
~~now~~ taken from up beds by Roman Officials
~~now~~ - any other novel adventure that may
turn up may not make you wish you were in
the land of Andrew Johnson & Wendell Phillips.
then I think we need not waste a great deal
of pity upon you but ^{may} conclude you are having
a right good time while we rejoice over it
with our whole hearts. I shall look for a letter
from Mary, ^{soon} telling me of that dinner & a
good deal more that I want to hear. Father
has just burst out laughing with the thought "I
wonder what kind of dinner Anne can cook",
& Mother asserts that you don't have any cooking
to do. Presa who went to Chelsea to spend
Christmas day, has come home to night with a
good deal to talk about, somewhat interfering
with the thread of my discourse, & I shall
probably make Standish's desiring a commentary
2 months hence. In regard to the expression
you quote against me I think I may justify
myself in this way, though confessing to any
amount of stupidity in my utterance -

2

Premising that I am not apt to expect the
"fortnightly silence to be broken." It had been
by the receipt of yr letter from Florence - that
having come one or two days before the expected
time, & I grew presuming on my castle building,
learning as I did from that, that there was
another letter begun in yr trunk. Now my dear
Anne don't you hereafter interpret any
of my chance wishes into a complaint of
remissness on yr part, or even suppose that
I need to hunt up yr letters to know when they
were written or when they were rec'd. I am
as much surprised as you can be at the
wonderful & beautiful regularity with which
they come & try all the time to school myself
to a patience that shall not allow useless
suffering when head & wave & the governments
of Europe & the U. States shall delay the move
of our hearts.

The Winter is speeding away with surprising
celerity giving us no suffering - When there is the
slightest threatening of it, armed & equipped
as common sense dictates & as yr & my com-
bined wardrobes allow, I can safely & com-
fortably encounter any rigor that has hitherto
pursued itself. And so it is with all of us. It
is true Father & Mother, considering discretion
the better part of valor, keep pretty near the
fires in the floor that our good furnace
makes almost beautiful. Mother delights
to be - I think supremely comfortable in the
appropriation of yr old brown snow boots, if

she didn't have to regret so much that you haven't them on your own feet. Indeed there is no end to Mother's laments over the exchange you have made of Mass for Italy - & now she sends her good night with a wail in it wh. I trust will turn into a bright good morning tomorrow. Father is engaged in a correspondence with a Mr. Peabody (brother of Elizabeth) respecting his ancestors of the Hunt family in Watertown. When you get to be 4 score years old some descendant of Deacon Coolidge or Dr. Flannwell or any old worthy or worthies that walked the Watertown streets when we were babies, may appear to us for a like kind of information.

What the accident was that he felt Mr. Johnson I have not learned. I think I have written you what Rebekah Buffam told me - that he "old get well in time & without his figurement" - & that he had endured the suffering with much less apparent loss of vitality than his friends had supposed possible. The pain you speak of is probably not from the dislocated shoulder - but from a strain from it that escaped the surgeon's eye & dropped down on to a bundle of nerves where, according to the Drs. it will not always cause such suffering. Nov. 14 - "Are you going home to talk to Ann?" said Mother as I appeared after dinner equipped for a walk. "Well tell her all the trifling things she wants to hear was the suggestion that followed my affirmative reply - a part of wh. I shall surely obey. That the trifles can be interesting surpasses my comprehension but they are at ye. service. Surely for the "handle" - Such whiteness below & such thickness above it would

be heart of not your eyes good to content. I sat & my Sabbath stills over all. A perfect winter day with the string taken out. Did you not like to see & feel it? I walked home from church on it for the fuller enjoyment of the after listening to a sermon wh. you may remember beginning "Lead us not into temptation" & ending with "where there is man there is God". Part of the way I had Mrs. Brown for company whose husband you remember if not herself - & I left her happy in the parting that she "old tell the old man that 'ye sister, for a thing is well & happy" in her exile - & being "only a few days since they were talking about you". If I had accomplished an old year's purpose to make myself a new year's presents of a gold pen such as the Tribune gives daily a column to advertise, & some new ink my writing might be less laborious & more satisfactory to you as well as myself. A dancing master sent round his prospectus some time ago promising so much valuable instruction, that we shall probably regret to our dying day that we did not seize the opportunity. If a writing master should offer as much in his line, I think you will reap the benefit - May that hope my beloved Susan you under my fortnightly inflictions.

Mrs. Shack who called upon us the other day, spoke

Very gratefully of the kindness shown to his daughter
by the Misses Williams, & Katie L. also of his
esteem for one of them who once lived in Newburyport.
It is pleasant to hear every good word you may
speak for yr neighbors confirmed by other testimony.
Mrs L. says some hard things about the disloyalty
that Mr Stillman had to encounter in Rome -
but the war is over & the folly & the sin wh. it
revealed may as well be hid out of sight. The
papers have probably told you how the Senate
checkmated Johnson the other day in the Stanton
business - The volcano wh. the affair threatened
has not yet sent out its fiery streams & probably
will not while the impeachment question is
in such willing hands, that it may be springing
at any moment.

We have been much interested this last week
in another of Mr Howells' books called "Italian
Journeys". Eschewing sentimentality to a degree
that almost includes sentiment, he is very
funny, while he gives an ignoramus like
me a good deal of pleasant information.
There is but one chapter devoted to Rome &
in that he reminds us of what you have said.
I think you could shake hands with him over
a good many similar experiences. I want
to find out who he is - An inhabitant of Cam-
bridge I infer who had some diplomatic em-
ployment that kept him in Italy several years.

3.

I will take this half sheet leaving for Carrie a whole one that shall make the $\frac{1}{4}$ of the two allows. On it I wish to send kindest regards to Miss Lewis & the other sculptresses who may chance to remember me. The story of the Bible & Brandy bottle makes me doubt the report of whose truth I have been questioned viz that the little Miss had turned Catholic. People also ask me of her progress in art. And I ask myself what Anne & Addy & Fidelity are doing. If that letter from Mary would but come I might get a hint wh. I promise not to divulge if Mamma is the word. I am glad you have given up Madam Sopranzi - for how you were to have afternoons for sight seeing when she came at 3. I could not understand, seeing by my atlas that Rome cannot rejoice in much more daylight than Belmont. My heart sinks within me when I read or think of how much you must see before you turn your steps homeward. ~~But~~ A year has passed since you talked of going & the coming back seems farther off if possible than it did then. If blessings are heaped up upon us in the coming year as they have been in the past we ought to be happy women & I think we will be.

The dress question (ye dress) my dear Anne somewhat exercised my mind. I know that you cannot afford to spend much for clothes & I have no need to spend much upon my self. Therefore I want you should use some of my

Surplus funds for that comely arrayal of
the outer woman worthy yr mother's daughters.
As I am wearing yr garments here at home,
you can have no scruples on the ground of
obligation. No dress here is presentable in
polite society that is not good - I wonder
if yr silk, lavender & blue & black have
gone through that process whereby enough
material is saved from a long full skirt to
make a short skirt beside. At least that is
what Carrie & I did with our black silks, & do
have a street & a parlor dress without the
trouble of stitching up. There is a great decline
in the price of clothing of all kinds particularly
cotton. Calicos at 9 pence with gold at 140 indi-
cate suffering for somebody, though many a
purchaser is glad to lay in a stock if not to
rejoice over the bargain. When a few weeks
ago gold fell to 130. I rejoiced exceedingly for
my traveling friends, but the joy was of short
duration. Now I live upon hope. That somehow
financial affairs will come right by & by.

The general health is good - Mother much
better than she was a fortnight ago. Father
afraid of slipping on the snowy roads, does
not exercise as much as I did wish, but seems
remarkably well. I indulge in a good deal
of out door (& indoor too) exercise & the use
of a hot soap stone for bed fellow & keep very
comfortable. I wish we did be sure that you
are as well provided for. A word to that effect
may come soon. In that hope I send love upon
love to all the friends in Rome.

Heaven bless you all is this Sabbath eve &
every day prayer of yr Sarah

What are the cars "concomitant ill" that will in
time depart"

Jan 22 - Sarah -
Rec'd Feb. 9 -

The letter probably of w^h the
one lost - was an answer



Miss Anne Whitney
Care Mess^{rs} Freeborn & Co
Rome
Italy

